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BOOK REVIEWS

Short Stories for Oral French. By ANNA W. BALLARD. New York: Scribner, 1912. Pp. xv+126.

This book is one of a series of French and German books which Scribner's Sons are publishing with the apparent intent of diffusing, if not exactly introducing, the "reform method" in American schools. As far as is needful for the use of the book itself, Miss Ballard explains the principles on which the method is based in her preface, and in the explicit directions given to teachers. Anyone desiring further information on the method will find it in a concise form in the *Report of the Committee of Twelve of the Modern Language Association*, D. C. Heath & Co., 1911.

Miss Ballard's book will undoubtedly fulfil its promise of providing adequate material for teachers who wish to give the method a trial. The stories appear well chosen, they have already stood the crucial test of classroom use, and are of sufficient interest and variety. Each story is followed by a list of questions, which the learner is expected to use in preparing the lesson for the next day. If these questions were omitted with a few of the later stories, it would be possible to assign to the class the very profitable task of formulating their own questions. The vocabulary does not translate the words into English, but defines them in French. The great difficulty of doing this with a limited vocabulary undoubtedly accounts for some rather questionable definitions. Is the pupil who fails to understand the word *animal* really helped by the definition, "être organisé et *doué* de mouvement," or does "qui est sur son *séant*" really enlighten him on the meaning of the word *assis*? The presentation of the French verb, the only grammatical topic treated, might call for some discussion, but only one remark seems imperative. Statements like "En français il y a trois conjugaisons," everywhere regrettable, become doubly so in a book of this nature. The learner is entitled to the truth in the study of language as in any other study, and should be taught nothing that must be unlearned later. Why not say at least "trois conjugaisons régulières"?

The very commendable purpose of the book greatly overshadows in interest the merit of the book itself, since the reform method is almost new to this country, and its successful introduction would most assuredly mean a step in advance on the road of educational progress. But just here, perhaps, a word of caution may be in order. Not until experiments in progressive education are attended with the scientific thoroughness and preparation that attend, e.g., the experiments in progressive agriculture, will they give lasting and conclusive results. The progressive farmer who wishes to raise a new

crop has his soil scientifically tested, and informs himself carefully with regard to the climatic conditions and the mode of culture under which the crop has been successfully raised, and regulates his own mode of culture accordingly. The reform method, so successfully used in German (and some other European) schools, presupposes for this success conditions that do not generally obtain in American schools, some, indeed, that are actually "antagonistic" to the usual methods employed there. Only one point, which is, however, vital, can be touched upon here.

According to Miss Ballard's directions the teacher will have to devote three recitation periods to each story, without taking into account the frequent reviews that are advocated. In the first period the story is told to, and read by, the class; in the second it is recited in French; in the third it is written in French. Done thoroughly and conscientiously this work will take up nearly the whole of the three recitation periods. On the contrary, after the story has been told and read in class, the average "diligent" pupil should not need more than half an hour to prepare the oral recitation for the next day, and barely half that time to prepare the written work for the third day. With some attention paid to verbs and other grammatical points, the possible profitable preparation would scarcely exceed one and a half hours for the three recitations, and would average considerably less for the "above the average" pupil. The average amount of preparation profitably devoted to each recitation period would not exceed half an hour, except for deficient pupils, and this would be just the amount of outside preparation expected in the German school-system. The American school-system, on the contrary, presupposes, for each forty or forty-five minute recitation of a college-preparatory unit, one hour and a quarter or one hour and a half outside preparation, nor can the required amount of reading (from 100-175 pages the first year) be "covered" unless the whole of this time is completely and profitably utilized. In other words, in German schools "the burden of learning" is laid principally on the classroom work, done under the direction of the teacher; in American schools it is laid principally on the preparation period, in the teacher's absence, and this period, in theory at least, is almost double the classroom period. It is noteworthy that the Committee of Twelve, in their thorough discussion of the different methods from the viewpoint of the American school, make no mention of the vital point of the time relation of classroom and preparation period, though it is a *sine qua non* factor of success (or failure) in all "imported" methods.

The German beginner who is supposed to devote not more than an hour and a half a day to the study of French is undoubtedly getting better value for the time employed than the American beginner who is supposed to devote from two hours to two hours and a quarter to the same study. But the American teacher who, without a careful analysis of the situation, attempts to introduce the German method of teaching into American conditions may be greatly disappointed, because much of the time specifically allotted to the outside preparation is voluntarily relinquished, and this loss is not always sufficiently

offset by the better method of classroom instruction. The result, then, is that the blame that should fall on the working-conditions is laid on the method itself, and ultimate progress is really rather retarded than advanced by such sporadic experiments.

Miss Ballard suggests, indeed, that the book can be used for oral work "no matter what other textbooks are appointed." This is true, and a little oral work cannot help proving beneficial with any method. But in the interest of real progress, is it at all desirable that the reform method should ever be judged in this country not on its own merits but by the incidental results obtained when it is grafted upon other methods, whose fundamental principles may actually be diametrically opposed to its own?

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CHICAGO

Educational Psychology. By EDWARD L. THORNDIKE. 2d ed. New York: The Science Press, 1911.

In this second edition the material which was presented in the first edition is completely recast and somewhat enlarged. The aim is the same as in the first edition, namely, to present the results of investigations—mainly by the statistical method—of the influence of heredity and of environment upon mental traits, and of individual differences in mental traits. In the second edition the arrangement of chapters has been made more systematic and several chapters have been omitted. The character of these changes indicates that the author's conception of his task has become clearer and more unified. Besides these changes the book is rewritten throughout, and is brought down to date by the discussion of investigations which have been made since the publication of the first edition. This book stands alone in the field which it covers, and the new edition is welcome.

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Plant Physiology, with Special Reference to Plant Production. By BENJAMIN M. DUGGAR. New York: Macmillan, 1912. Pp. xv+516. \$1.60 net.

Professor Duggar has undertaken the task of presenting the essentials of plant physiology as they relate to crops. It seems strange, since plants are the essential things in agriculture, that plant physiology has been so long neglected as one of the essential phases of study. In agricultural and horticultural schools chemistry has usually been the underlying scientific subject, perhaps because it was well organized at an earlier date than was botany, and therefore its relation to plant productivity more easily shown; and possibly chemistry has maintained its position as the fundamental agricultural science because of the "inertia of momentum" that it has acquired through the fact of its past use. Professor Duggar's book organizes the